

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA**  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

**Subject**

Sexual Harassment Policy

**Policy  
Number**

C-22

**Page**

1 of 3

Purpose

To establish a uniform policy Prohibiting sexual harassment or sex discrimination.

Background

California State and Federal laws have mandated employers to implement a policy prohibiting sexual harassment, pursuant to guidelines on sex discrimination issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Department of Fair Employment and Housing. The United States Supreme Court, in its decision in the Meritor Savings vs. Vinson (1986) 477 U.S. 57, and Harris vs. Forklift Systems, Inc. (1993) 114 S. Ct. 367, affirmed that sexual harassment is unlawful discrimination under Title VII. The Supreme Court has given the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines great deference because they express the will of Congress.

Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors that the County of San Diego will provide a work environment free of sexual harassment.

A. Definition of Sexual Harassment:

The Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines sexual harassment in the workplace as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other visual, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct is unwelcome or has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

B. Examples:

Examples of sexual harassment may include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations.
2. Derogatory comments, such as sexual jokes, remarks, questions, teasing, leering, or gestures.
3. Touching, patting, pinching, impeding or blocking movement.

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**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

**Subject**

Sexual Harassment Policy

**Policy  
Number**

C-22

**Page**

2 of 3

4. Threats of physical abuse.
5. Sexually suggestive objects, such as pictures, cartoons, posters, that are offensive to other employees.
6. Re-occurring and unwelcome expressions of affection or requests for dates or any other behaviors of a sexual nature after being informed that such conducts are not welcome.
7. Requesting sexual favors accompanied by reprisal, threat of reprisal, or implied threat of reprisal following a negative response. For example, implying or actually withholding support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment; suggesting a poor performance report will be prepared, or suggesting probation will be failed.
8. Engaging in implicit or explicit coercive sexual behavior which is used to control, influence or affect the career, salary and/or work environment of another employee.
9. Offering favors or employment benefits such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations or recommendations; favorable assigned duties or work shifts in exchange for sexual favors.
10. Actual or attempted rape or sexual assault.

**C. Current Law:**

1. Sexual harassment by a person, whether an employee, supervisor, manager or non-employee who regularly and routinely is present in the work area, may make the employer liable for the acts of those individuals.
2. The law requires immediate corrective action by the employer as soon as an employee gives notice, in any form, that sexual harassment is occurring in the work area.
3. The harassment regulated by this law pertains to unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature, within the work area. The work area extends to non-work places and non-work hours when the harasser continues the behavior.
4. The law does not intend to regulate or interfere with mutually acceptable, voluntary reciprocal relationships.

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA**  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

**Subject**

Sexual Harassment Policy

**Policy  
Number**

C-22

**Page**

3 of 3

5. Vulgar language of a sexual nature that is repetitive and so pervasive as to poison the environment is illegal.

**D. Liability:**

Where sexual harassment exists, the potential for legal remedies and individual punitive damages are a real threat to the County and/or the harasser. The liability may even extend to the supervisor who is aware of the harassment and does nothing about it.

**E. Responsibility:**

1. The Chief Administrative Officer shall be responsible for implementing and vigorously pursuing this policy to prevent sexual harassment.
2. Department heads shall be responsible for maintaining a harassment free work environment in all areas under their jurisdiction.
3. It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors that all complaints of sexual harassment should be initiated and resolved at the departmental level, if possible. If not resolved at that level, the department should advise the complainant to file a complaint as described in the County Administrative Manual. Employees should feel free to file such a complaint using the process with which they feel most comfortable.

**F. Additional Information:**

The Chief Administrative Officer will ensure that all County executives and other officers as necessary are available to provide information and assistance to employees who are dealing with sexual harassment issues. The action to be taken by employees of all levels shall be defined in the County Administrative Manual.

**Sunset Date**

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 12-31-01.

**Board Action**

8-24-82 (5)  
7-26-88 (43)  
12-12-89 (49)  
3-27-90 (47)  
11-29-94 (40)  
5-19-98 (28)

**CAO Reference**

1. Chief Administrative Office